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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 RABAT 001162

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TAGS: [AG](#) [ETRD](#) [IZ](#) [KPKO](#) [MARR](#) [MO](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SNAR](#)

SUBJECT: US-MOROCCAN MILITARY CONSULTATIONS: THE MOROCCANS  
WANT MORE

REF: A. RABAT 1071

[B](#). RABAT 1069

Classified By: A/DCM Timothy Lenderking for Reasons 1.4. (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The third annual US-Morocco Defense Consultative Committee took place in Rabat on May 18-19, 2005, led on the US side by ASD Peter Rodman and on the Moroccan side by Minister Delegate to the PM in Charge of the Administration of National Defense Mr. Abderrahmane Sbai. During the executive committee and plenary sessions on May 18, attended by all of Morocco's top brass, the Moroccan message to the US was clear: Morocco values its expanding military relationship with the US and seeks to strengthen it further. The Moroccans specifically acknowledged the need for a five-year strategic bilateral defense plan, and advocated expansion of military exercises, and an annual plan to augment Moroccan participation in workshops and training seminars. The Moroccans praised the Utah State Partnership Program and indicated support for sending a liaison officer to CENTCOM. Minister Sbai reaffirmed Moroccan readiness to provide training to Iraqi security forces, in Morocco, if the Iraqi government asked, and Rodman encouraged the Moroccans to work directly with the Iraqi leadership to pursue this. The Moroccans cited battling illegal immigration as a major preoccupation of the Moroccan military and sought US technical assistance in this area. ASD Rodman briefed on the status of the US-Algerian military dialogue, latest developments in Iraq, and termed the current situation concerning Middle East peace a "moment of hope." End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The third annual US-Morocco Defense Consultative Committee took place in Rabat May 18-19. The US delegation was led by ASD Rodman, while the Moroccan side was led by Minister Delegate to the PM in Charge of the Administration of National Defense Abderrahmane Sbai. All of the senior Moroccan military leadership attended the meeting. Present were General Abdelaziz Bennani, Inspector General of the Royal Armed Forces; General Hosni Benslimane, Commandant of the Royal Moroccan Gendarmerie; General Bouchaib Arroub, Commander of the Third Bureau; Chief of the DCSD (Fifth Bureau) Lieutenant General Mohamed Belbachir; Vice Admiral Mohammed Triki, Chief of the Royal Moroccan Navy; and Lieutenant General Ahmed Boutaleb, Chief of the Moroccan Air Force. US members of the Executive Committee included Ambassador Riley, Major General Scott Gratton (EUCOM J-5), Mr. Paul Hulley (OSD), Mr. John Moseley (DSCA), and Embassy Rabat Acting DATT, ODC Chief, and Polcouns.

[1](#)3. (C) Sbai opened by stressing convergence and solidarity in the US-Morocco bilateral relationship. He underscored the GOM's commitment to good neighborliness and regional stability, and to continuing to prosecute the war on terror. He noted the GOM sought to exert greater control on a variety of illegal activities, among them illegal migration through Morocco to Europe. He described the US-Morocco military relationship as one of "quality" and hoped for US support for military upgrades. Sbai reiterated that Morocco's offer to train Iraqi security forces was still open, if the Iraqis asked. He described Morocco as a "laboratory" in which an Arab, Islamic country could make progress promoting democracy while adhering to the tenets of Islam. May 16, 2003 --the day of the Casablanca terrorist bombing-- had been a tragic day for Morocco, in which "the forces of darkness" had manifested themselves. In response, the GOM recognized the importance of fighting unemployment through economic development, as well as combating terrorism. He highlighted the training of imams and promotion of religious tolerance as an important reform underway in Morocco. Morocco believed that Islam was a religion of progress; the fundamentalists were seizing on only part of Islam. Religious reform was important because in times of social strife, religious "illiterates" were vulnerable to extremism.

[1](#)4. (C) ASD Rodman responded that the US-Morocco relationship was more important than ever, and expressed appreciation that the US and Morocco were on the same side in a new era. Morocco is a leader in many fields and had shown moral courage in spearheading regional efforts to promote democracy. He was pleased that Morocco was pursuing a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the US and that Morocco had qualified for support under the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA). He hoped the Acquisition and Cross-Services Agreement

(ACSA) would go forward as it would facilitate aspects of the bilateral military relationship. He thanked Morocco for facilitating contingency operations and hoped to continue our bilateral education and training opportunities. He saluted recent military exercises such as Majestic Eagle and African Lion. Rodman reaffirmed the US offer to station a Moroccan liaison officer at CENTCOM and hoped Morocco would take advantage of it. He appreciated the GOM's green light to a NATO security agreement. Med Dialogue and NATO were important security fora, he said, and the US encouraged their growth, as the Sahel region was assuming greater strategic importance. He applauded Morocco's contributions to international peacekeeping and the GOM's open and effective handling of the issue of sexual abuse by peacekeepers in the Congo.

Iraq  
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15. (C) ASD Rodman said important, historic progress was being made in Iraq. Rodman stressed that while coalition forces were making progress in defeating the insurgency, the US strategy in Iraq was as much political as military. The January 30 elections were a dramatic event. Iraqi institutions were forming and filling the political vacuum. Legitimacy is the most powerful weapon against the insurgents. The different communities were showing a commitment to a unified Iraq. The Sunni community is splitting, with some now joining the political process; twenty percent of the positions in the new government were reserved for Sunnis, which tracked with the Sunni percentage of the population. Iraqi leaders were showing statesmanship and learning compromise and coexistence. The enemy is frustrated and losing ground. Violence continued because killing civilians is easy. The strategic goal of the extremists is to derail the political process, however they are failing. The US was confident its strategy was working.

16. (C) Rodman underscored that the primary mission of the US forces in Iraq now is training Iraqis. Iraqi forces now numbered around 165,000. The US wanted Iraqis to assume control of their country -- to turn Iraq back to Iraqis -- as soon as possible. Morocco's offer to train Iraqi security personnel goes to the heart of the international strategy. Rodman encouraged the GOM to deal directly with Iraqi officials on how to implement this offer and how to prioritize specialized training for police and security officials. Sending a liaison officer to CENTCOM would assist this process. Sbair noted that Morocco stood ready to assist with training Iraqi security forces "if the Iraqis so requested."

Middle East  
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17. (C) Rodman called the present "a moment of hope" in the Palestinian conflict. The democratic election for the Palestinians was an important development. Gaza withdrawal presented an opportunity for the Palestinians to take their destiny into their own hands. The US was committed to getting the process underway.

Comments from the Moroccan Generals  
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18. (C) General Bennani highlighted illegal migration as a priority area for the Moroccan military. This has been a growing problem over the last five years, with more immigrants coming from South Asia in addition to sub-Saharan Africa. Crossing the Straits of Gibraltar to Europe was still the goal, but migrants were heading in larger numbers for the Canary Islands. King Mohammed had ordered the Moroccan military to seal the borders from illegal migrants, but the classical means of combating illegal migration had limitations. There was an alert on Morocco's borders virtually every hour. Groups were using the Sahel more for transit, and the GOM was concerned about what items these groups could be infiltrating into Morocco. Morocco sought US assistance in this area. Rodman agreed this was an important strategic problem and said the USG could link the GOM with its border experts.

19. (C) Bennani continued that the GOM sought a five-year strategic plan with the US that would be defended before the US Congress. The 1973 plan needed to be reworked, with an equipment plan incorporated into it. Rodman said he was pleased with the idea and was eager to see the GOM follow through on this. He thought a five-year plan would be received positively by the US Congress.

10. (C) General Benslimane discussed the challenge of fighting drug trafficking and crime. He said organized crime networks have developed and are being exploited by international organizations. These networks, which reach Dakar and Bamako among other places, needed to be destroyed. He said 500 such networks have been destroyed since 1997. There were branches of some organizations operating in the

"southern provinces" (Western Sahara), as adduced by periodic concentrations of vehicles the GOM spotted. The GOM concern was ensuring that terrorist organizations were not able to take advantage of these networks. Morocco could benefit from assistance from US security organizations.

11. (C) General Arroub ticked off the following items in a short presentation:

-- He hoped to expand the number of Moroccan students going to the US for training from the current level of 25-30 per year. Morocco was pleased to have welcomed 68 American officers to the staff college over the years.

-- Morocco was ready, willing, and able to expand the number of military exercises with the US each year, and ACSA would provide a working framework.

-- He urged the two sides to develop an annual plan for seminars and workshops and said Morocco was ready to send more officers.

-- King Mohammed has ordered that English teaching be institutionalized in all military schools in Morocco, for cadets and NCOs both. Morocco had been pleased with the American training resources used in the instruction. Morocco would welcome an American assessment team to provide expertise and support on how to implement this program most effectively in the future.

-- He hailed the Utah State Partnership Program as "excellent," adding that Morocco was honored that the Moroccan Armed Forces would be able to participate in an upcoming exhibition in the Utah State military museum.

-- Morocco was ready to send a liaison officer to CENTCOM. "This was established," Arroub said. The GOM and US now needed to discuss modalities on how to make this happen.

-- He noted there would be a June 6-7 signing ceremony on ACSA in Germany, which General Tamdi (B-4) would attend.

-- He invited the US to participate in a series of exhibits covering World War II to be held in Morocco on May 14, 2006, the fiftieth anniversary of the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces.

12. (C) Vice Admiral Triki, in very brief remarks, highlighted the need for additional resources to combat terrorists transiting the Straits of Gibraltar.

#### US-Algeria Military Dialogue -----

13. (C) ASD Rodman briefed the plenary session on the recent visit to Washington of Algerian Ministry of Defense Director General Senhadji and the status of the US-Algeria military dialogue. Rodman stressed that the dialogue was in an early stage and assured the Moroccans there would be no surprises. The US-Algeria military relationship would not harm Morocco. The US objective was stability and harmony in the Maghreb, and any influence the US gained through the dialogue with Algeria would be applied toward that end. Rodman explained that Algeria's support for the global war on terror was driving the Algerians closer to the US. The military dialogue would be gradual, proceeding by small steps. The US was aware of the balance of power in the Maghreb and did not intend to alter it. Rodman said the US was pleased with the progress that Morocco and Algeria were making in their bilateral relations, exemplified by the King's April visit to Algiers, and that the two sides had participated in a EUCOM conference in December. He urged further such contact and progress. Rodman stressed the US would keep in close touch with Morocco as the military dialogue with Algeria evolved and that Morocco could have confidence in the US.

14. (U) ASD Rodman has reviewed and cleared this cable.  
RILEY